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ABSTRACT

Narconon developed a drug education program as an adjunct to its drug treatment program. This program is designed for presentation to junior high and high school students. Lecturers are generally former drug abusers, and attempts are made to align the background of the lecturer to that of the students. The lecturer covers the effects of drug use, both mental and physical; the long-term effects on the ability to attain goals; the causes of addiction; and the responsibility of the individual in the use of drugs. Scare tactics are avoided. Lectures are interspersed with audience participation. The program is delivered in either one, three, or ten 1-hour presentations. All formats include lecture, discussion and, in the 10-hour series, student exercises. One-hour presentations were given to 37 classes in 15 Los Angeles, California area schools. Students (N=1,045) completed questionnaires immediately following the conclusion of the presentation. Findings suggest that Narconon's drug education program was effective in teaching students about the adverse consequences of drug abuse and had a very positive influence on the attitudes of students toward drugs. The most dramatic effect on attitude was observed in the borderline group of students--those indicating that they might use drugs in the future--with 86% of the students in this category indicating that they were less likely to use drugs following the presentation. Findings are reported in the areas of attitude toward drugs prior to the lecture, change in attitude following the lecture, education, preferred speaker, and current drug abuse. (NB)

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NARCONON DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

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and Sandra L. Chapman, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

The abuse of drugs has become a problem of major concern in the American culture. Despite the reported decline in the use of illicit drugs, it is yet true that 58% of high school seniors have tried an illicit drug and, further, that the use of certain drugs, such as cocaine, is on the rise (1). With one in twenty-five high school seniors smoking marijuana daily and one in twenty drinking alcohol (1), it is imperative that we discover effective means of preventing and treating substance abuse.

One mode of substance abuse prevention employs specialized drug education programs. The overall goal of these programs is to effect a behavioral change away from substance abuse, particularly in the student population. An increased knowledge of drugs and a change in the attitude towards drugs are also considered to be positive steps in the right direction (2).

There are a multitude of such programs currently being delivered (2-4). Unfortunately, the effectiveness of many of them has not been evaluated in even a cursory fashion (5,6). In this report, we present the results of an initial examination of the Narconon drug education program. Though not a controlled study of the program, this preliminary assessment offers some insight into its effects.

Program Description

Narconon developed this drug education program as an adjunct to its drug treatment program. It is primarily designed for presentation to junior high and high school students, generally as a supplement to the health educa-

tion curriculum.

The lecturers are generally former drug abusers, having extensive personal experience with and factual knowledge of drugs. In addition, Narconon tries to align the background of the lecturer to that of the students being addressed. Both of these factors tend to increase the credibility of the lecturer in the eyes of the student population.

In this program, the lecturer covers the effects of drug use, both mental and physical; the long term effects on the ability to attain goals; the causes of addiction; and the responsibility of the individual in the use of drugs. He also points out the profit motive behind the sale of any product, including drugs. "Scare tactics" are specifically avoided in the presentation.

These lectures are interspersed with audience participation and, as many of the lecturers are former abusers, there are often comments derived from personal experience on the effects of drug abuse.

The program is delivered in either one, three, or ten one-hour presentations. All of these include lecture, discussion and, in the ten-hour series, exercises which ask the students to apply what they have learned. As a preliminary view of the effects of the program, we have compiled responses to a survey conducted by Narconon personnel immediately after their single-lecture presentation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Students participating in this survey were predominately from sixth through twelfth grades. In addition, there was one class from second grade and one night school class composed of high-school level students. One-hour presentations were given to each class individually.

Surveys were administered by Narconon personnel. The questionnaires were filled in by students immediately after the conclusion of the presentation. Table I presents a copy of the survey instrument employed.

TABLE I

NARCONON INTERNATIONAL
Drug Education Survey

1. How did you feel about drugs before the lecture?

2. Did your feelings change? If yes, how do you feel about drugs now?

3. Did you learn something new about drugs?

4. Who would you prefer to talk to you about drugs? Why?

A. A person who has never used drugs.
B. A person who has had a drug abuse problem.
C. A police officer.

School _____ Grade _____ Date _____

A total of 1,045 questionnaires from 37 classes in 15 Los Angeles area schools were included in this analysis. The selection of classes was based on availability, with all replies from each available class included in the tabulation.

For 26 of the classes, the lecturer had counted the total number of students in the class. By counting the questionnaires collected from these classes and comparing this to the total number of students, we were able to estimate the fraction of students responding to the survey. For these classes, from ten schools, where total student counts were available, 633 of the 706 students answered the survey questions. This represents an 89.7% response rate.

A pilot screening of 100 questionnaires was undertaken to establish the types of

TABLE II

TABULATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Question 1. How did you feel about drugs before the lecture?

a. Supports drug use.
b. Might use in future.
c. Indifferent (includes "Doesn't care if friends do", "It's your own decision", and "Didn't think too bad").
d. Doesn't like drugs.
e. Very opposed to drug use.
f. No Answer or Can't tell from answer.

Question 2. Did your feelings change?

a. Yes -- no longer support drug use.
b. Yes -- feel more strongly against drugs.
c. Yes -- know more.
d. Yes -- no explanation.
e. No.
f. Unclear.
g. No Answer.

Question 3. Did you learn something new about drugs?

a. Yes -- learned about effects (on body and brain).
b. Yes -- learned technical facts about drugs.
c. Yes -- one use can affect you.
d. Yes -- worse than I thought.
e. Yes -- no explanation.
f. Yes -- learned a lot.
g. No.
h. No answer.

Question 4. Who would you prefer to talk to you about drugs?

a. Person who has never used drugs.
b. Person who has had a drug abuse problem.
c. Police Officer.
d. Combination.
e. All.
f. None.
g. Another.
h. No Answer.

Question 4a. Why?

a. Trust him.
b. Knows what he's talking about.
c. Shows the right way.
d. Feel comfortable with him.
e. No answer/ Can't tell.

answers present in this survey. This resulted in a classification of survey answers as presented in Table II. The entire set of 1,045 questionnaires was then tabulated using this classification system. The results from this tabulation were analyzed, separating the population into groups both by grade and by response to the initial question of the survey, that is, whether the respondent supported drug use, might use in the future, was indifferent, disliked drugs, or was very opposed to drugs. The results of these tabulations are presented in the accompanying tables.

RESULTS

Attitude Towards Drugs Prior to the Lecture

The attitudes held by students prior to these lectures are tabulated in Table III and the percentages of students falling into these classifications are presented in Table IV. These data are derived from answers to the first survey question. The tables present both the overall results of this tabulation ("All Grades" figures at the bottom of the tables) and the responses when students are separated by grade.

The attitude towards drugs for the total group is fairly strongly against drug use before the lecture, as indicated by the fact that 83% of the responses fall into either the "doesn't like drugs" or "very opposed to drugs" categories. This value ranges from 78.8% to 89.5% for the different grades. The percentage of students either "supporting drug use" or indicating that they "might use drugs in the future" is 7.2% overall and ranges from 2.3% to 13.8%. (Table IV) When students are separated by grade there is not a consistent trend in the distribution of student responses to this question.

In the balance of this report, tabulated responses are presented with separation either by grade or by this initial attitude towards drugs.

Change in Attitude Following the Lecture

One of the desired effects of this drug education lecture is to strengthen the attitudes

TABLE III

RESPONSES TO "PRIOR ATTITUDE" QUESTION

Question = "How did you feel about drugs before the lecture?"

	TALLY OF SURVEYS INDICATING:						
GRADE:	Supports Use	Might Use	Indif-ferent	Doesn't Like	Very Opposed	No Answer/ Unclear	Total
Second	2	0	1	16	2	0	21
Sixth	1	2	11	77	42	12	145
Seventh	6	2	16	85	43	20	172
Eighth	9	6	8	83	3	18	127
Ninth	0	1	4	14	19	0	38
Tenth	19	6	36	130	168	15	374
Eleventh	9	0	10	45	32	6	102
Twelfth	2	2	3	15	11	2	35
Night school	0	2	2	8	12	7	31
All Grades:	48	21	91	473	332	80	1045

TABLE IV

RESPONSES TO "PRIOR ATTITUDE" QUESTION, BY PERCENTAGE

Question = "How did you feel about drugs before the lecture?"

	PERCENTAGE OF ANSWERS INDICATING:				
GRADE:	Supports Use	Might Use	Indif-ferent	Doesn't Like	Very Opposed
Second	9.5	0.	4.8	76.2	9.5
Sixth	0.8	1.5	8.3	57.9	31.6
Seventh	4.0	1.3	10.5	55.9	28.3
Eighth	8.3	5.5	7.3	76.1	2.8
Ninth	0.	2.6	10.5	36.8	50.0
Tenth	5.3	1.7	10.0	36.2	46.8
Eleventh	9.4	0.	10.4	46.9	33.3
Twelfth	6.1	6.1	9.1	45.5	33.3
Night school	0.	8.3	8.3	33.3	50.0
All Grades Percent:	5.0	2.2	9.4	49.0	34.4

TABLE V

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE FOLLOWING LECTURE, SEPARATED BY GRADE

Question: Did your feelings change?
If yes, how do you feel about drugs now?

	QUESTION RESPONSES:						
GRADE:	No Longer Supports	Feel More Strongly	Knows More	Simple Yes	No	No Answer/ Unclear	Total
Second	0	0	0	6	14	1	21
Sixth	3	36	12	6	83	5	145
Seventh	6	32	8	10	95	21	172
Eighth	3	25	3	18	59	19	127
Ninth	1	9	2	0	23	3	38
Tenth	5	70	23	8	247	21	374
Eleventh	1	26	11	5	52	7	102
Twelfth	2	5	0	0	23	5	35
Night school	1	10	5	1	9	5	31
All Grades:	22	213	64	54	605	87	1045

against drugs in the student population. The question "Did your feelings change (towards drugs)?" is aimed at assessing this effect. Responses to this question are presented in Table V, broken down by grade, and Table VI, broken down by prior attitude.

As is evident from Tables V and VI, this goal is achieved in at least 34% of the students surveyed. Responses are similar when answers are separated by grade (Table V), though there appears to be a stronger effect in the night school class. When answers are separated by prior attitude there is a marked difference in response to the lecture (Table VI). Whereas 29% of the students with a prior attitude of "Doesn't like drugs" or "Very opposed to drugs" report a change in attitude, 86% with a prior attitude that they "Might use drugs" indicate a change. In other groups, 42% of the students previously supporting drug use report a change of attitude and 57% of those indifferent towards drug use indicate a change. Within the indifferent category, 82% of those previously considering that drugs "weren't too bad" report a change.

This heterogeneity in response is as might be expected from this survey question. Though only 29% of the students initially disliking drugs indicate a change in attitude, negative answers in this group are indicative of an unchanged dislike of drugs. The changes in attitude cited by these students were a heightened awareness of the adverse effects of drugs, an increased responsibility towards others using drugs, or an increased certainty of the correctness of their own attitudes.

For those students previously supporting drug use, the answers to this question fell into two categories. Most of the students with no change of attitude stated that they were drug users and that this was not going to change. Those reporting drug use that had a change of attitude indicated that, after the lecture, they were more concerned about the effects of drugs or that they had not realized that drugs were so damaging.

TABLE VI

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE FOLLOWING LECTURE, SEPARATED BY PRIOR ATTITUDE

Question: Did your feelings change?
If yes, how do you feel about drugs now?

PRIOR ATTITUDES:	QUESTION RESPONSES: No Longer Supports	Feel More Strongly	Knows More	Simple Yes	No	No Answer/ Unclear	Total
Supports Use	8	3	3	6	21	7	48
Might Use	7	7	2	2	3	0	21
Indifferent	5	30	8	9	29	10	91
Doesn't Like	1	86	29	20	303	34	473
Very Opposed	1	74	13	7	227	10	332
No Answer	0	13	9	10	22	26	80
Totals:	22	213	64	54	605	87	1045

TABLE VII

REPORTED LEARNING, SEPARATED BY GRADE

Question = "Did you learn something new about drugs?"

GRADE:	YES	NO	No Answer	Total
Second	16	2	3	21
Sixth	126	19	0	145
Seventh	137	21	14	172
Eighth	91	30	6	127
Ninth	33	5	0	38
Tenth	289	73	12	374
Eleventh	67	24	11	102
Twelfth	22	12	1	35
Night school	26	0	5	31
All Grades:	807	186	52	1045

Changes in those who had indicated that they might use drugs were quite pronounced. Responses clearly indicated a heightened awareness of the adverse effects caused by

TABLE VIII

REPORTED LEARNING, SEPARATED BY PRIOR ATTITUDE

Question = "Did you learn something new about drugs?"

INITIAL RESPONSE:	YES	NO	No Answer	Total
Supports Use	30	13	5	48
Might Use	15	5	1	21
Indifferent	66	19	6	91
Doesn't Like	373	80	20	473
Very Opposed	267	59	6	322
No Answer	56	10	14	80
Total:	807	186	52	1045

drug abuse. Comments indicating that they would now never use drugs were common.

Comments from students who had previously been indifferent towards drug use focused on a stronger dislike of drugs, a desire to keep friends off drugs and surprise at the extent of the adverse effects.

Overall, the changes resulting from the lecture seem to be an enhanced awareness of the adverse effects of drugs, a decreased desire to try them, and, in some students, an increased level of responsibility towards getting their peers to abstain from drug use.

It should be noted that not a single response from this sample indicated either a heightened interest in the use of drugs or enhanced desire to experience their effects.

Education

Another goal of this lecture series is to teach students the effects of drug abuse, both on the body and on the lifestyle of the individual. The effectiveness of this program in teaching students is tabulated in Tables VII and VIII. 77% of the students reported learning something from this lecture. When broken down by grade, there was an approximately 65% positive response in grades 11 and 12, with all other grades having an approximately 80% positive response. When broken down by initial attitude, there was a 63% positive response from students in the "supports use" category, an approximately 71% positive response in the "might use", "indifferent", and "no answer" categories, and an 80% positive response in the "doesn't like" and "very opposed" categories.

Responses to the question regarding increased knowledge of drugs varied considerably. Increased understanding of the adverse effects on the body and brain were the main points mentioned (32% of positive answers), while increased awareness of technical facts concerning drugs (i.e. the history of synthetic drugs; the possibility of contamination of street drugs) were indicated in 13% of the positive responses. Several students commented with surprise on the effects on the life-style and morals of the drug user, not previously realizing the extent of the problem. In addition, comments from several students indicated an increased awareness of their personal responsibility to help combat drug abuse. These responses were not specifically tabulated.

TABLE IX

PREFERRED LECTURER, SEPARATED BY GRADE

Question = "Who would you prefer to talk to about drugs?"

	PREFERRED LECTURER IS:						
GRADE:	Never Used Drugs	Has Had Abuse Problem	Police Officer	Combin-ation	All of These	Other	Total
Second	1	2	14	0	0	4	21
Sixth	10	112	10	4	5	4	145
Seventh	10	127	15	10	1	9	172
Eighth	3	107	5	6	0	6	127
Ninth	2	32	2	0	2	0	38
Tenth	13	309	23	10	4	15	374
Eleventh	5	77	7	2	0	11	102
Twelfth	2	30	0	1	1	1	35
Night school	2	27	0	1	0	1	31
All Grades:	48	823	76	34	13	51	1045

TABLE X

PREFERRED LECTURER, SEPARATED BY PRIOR ATTITUDE

Question = "Who would you prefer to talk to about drugs?"

	PREFERRED LECTURER IS:						
INITIAL RESPONSE:	Never Used Drugs	Has Had Abuse Problem	Police Officer	Combin-ation	All of These	Other	Total
Supports Use	4	35	1	0	0	8	48
Might Use	0	19	0	2	0	0	21
Indifferent	2	75	7	3	1	3	91
Doesn't Like	18	370	43	18	3	21	473
Very Opposed	17	267	17	10	8	13	332
No Answer	7	57	8	1	1	6	80
Totals:	48	823	76	34	13	51	1045

TABLE XI

FACTORS IMPORTANT FOR PRESENTER, SEPARATED BY GRADE
Question: "Why?" following "Who would you prefer to talk to you about drugs?"

	REASON FOR PREFERENCE:					
GRADE:	Trust Him	Knows What He's Talking About	Can Show the Right Way	Feel Comfort-able	No Answer	Total
Second	0	0	0	0	21	21
Sixth	4	66	3	5	67	145
Seventh	1	81	2	3	85	172
Eighth	0	67	0	0	60	127
Ninth	1	19	0	2	16	38
Tenth	19	181	0	12	162	374
Eleventh	3	37	1	0	61	102
Twelfth	0	15	0	0	20	35
Night school	0	15	0	0	16	31
All Grades:	28	481	6	22	508	1045

Preferred Speaker

The receptiveness of the students to the lecturer was assessed by the final questions. Responses to the question "Who would you prefer to talk to you about drugs?" are presented in Tables IX and X. Most of the students in the upper grades preferred to hear the lecture from a former user while those in second grade preferred a police officer (Table IX). There was little difference in response when separated by prior attitude.

Regardless of the preference, the reasons given for the preference usually centered around the students' opinion that that individual "Knew what he was talking about" or "Understood the situation" (Tables XI and XII). The exceptions to this are found in those preferring a lecturer who had never used drugs, and in those preferring someone other than the choices offered with the question (Table XII). Students in the upper grades stated that they were curious about the real effects of drugs and considered that a former user could more accurately relate the difficulties of addiction and the long-term adverse effects of drug use.

Current Drug Abuse

One question which was not directly asked of the students was whether they abused drugs themselves. Some of the students stated, however, that they were either drug users or had used drugs in the past. The number of students reporting drug use is presented in Table XIII. These students represent 5.6% of the total students surveyed. The highest percent of these admitted users was present in the high school population.

It is notable that when these students' attitudes towards drugs were tabulated, 39% of these students either didn't like drugs or were very opposed to drugs. Additional study of the changes in attitude and the education of this type of student and how these changes impinge on their actual drug use will be included in future analyses.

TABLE XII

FACTORS IMPORTANT FOR PRESENTER, SEPARATED BY PRESENTER PREFERENCE
Question: "Why?" following "Who would you prefer to talk to you about drugs?"

	REASON FOR PREFERENCE:					
PREFERENCE:	Trust Him	Knows What He's Talking About	Can Show the Right Way	Feel Comfort-able	No Answer	Total
Never Used Drug	3	1	3	5	36	48
Had Drug Problem	12	449	0	8	354	823
Police Officer	9	18	1	1	47	76
Abuser/Non-User	3	1	0	1	6	11
Police/Abuser	0	8	1	0	12	21
Police/Non-User	0	0	1	0	1	2
All of Above	1	2	0	4	6	13
None of Above	0	0	0	0	10	10
Other	0	1	0	3	4	8
No Answer	0	1	0	0	32	33
Total:	28	481	6	22	508	1045

TABLE XIII

NUMBER OF DRUG USERS

GRADE:	Number of Users	Total# of Students	Percent Users
Second	0	21	0.
Sixth	0	145	0.
Seventh	1	172	0.6
Eighth	3	127	2.4
Ninth	2	38	5.3
Tenth	30	374	8.0
Eleventh	17	102	16.7
Twelfth	4	35	11.4
Night School	1	31	3.2
All Grades:	58	1045	5.55

CONCLUSION

This is a report of a pilot assessment of the Narconon drug education program, undertaken as a prerequisite to the development of a more detailed study. The authors recognize that this is a tabulation of available data rather than a controlled study (7) of this drug education program. Despite the shortcomings of this pilot, perhaps the most limiting of which is the extremely short time frame between lecture presentation and survey completion, this tabulation does allow some insight into the effects of the Narconon program.

These results suggest that Narconon's drug education program is effective in teaching students about the adverse consequences of drug abuse and has a very positive influence on the attitudes of students towards drugs. The most dramatic effect on attitude is observed in the borderline group of students -- those indicating that they might use drugs in

the future -- with 86% of the students in this category indicating that they were less likely to use drugs following the presentation. Although such a switch in attitude does not always correlate with improved behavior (2,8), this result is quite promising.

The education goals were met rather uniformly in all categories of students, with a somewhat stronger effect on students in the lower grades and on those in the categories disliking drugs. It would be worthwhile to more clearly identify which specific points in the lectures were retained to better target the program for these students.

The utilization of former drug users as lecturers is a point in favor of this program. Though the survey employed here was quite limited in scope, it does align with other data regarding credible sources for this age group (9-12). Students in the upper grades are well aware of the presence of a drug abuse problem; what they want are hard facts on real-life consequences of drug abuse. These speakers are able to bring home to their audience a strong message concerning the personal devastation caused by drug abuse.

Although this assessment does not meet the criteria of a rigorous scientific study, this initial assessment of the Narconon program has yielded encouraging results regarding the effectiveness of its approach to drug education. It is clear, from the trends in drug abuse, that we have not yet found the optimal solution to the substance abuse problem. It has been suggested that what is needed in drug education is many coordinated approaches, repeated over a period of time, so that the anti-drug message will be reinforced (13). This assessment supports the use of the Narconon drug education program as one of the components of such a multi-faceted approach.

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